

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image formation system comprising:
- an image formation apparatus connected to a network,
said image formation apparatus having one or more hardware
5 resources of a display section, an operation panel section,
a printing section, and an image pickup section, wherein
said image formation apparatus capable of providing one or
more services of a printer, a copier, or a facsimile; and
a server connected to the network, said server
10 providing a software component to said image formation
apparatus via said network,
- wherein said image formation apparatus includes,
a selection unit that selects a desired software
component from a list of software components accumulated
15 in said server and displayed on said display section;
an acquisition unit that acquires the software
component selected by said selection unit and authentication
information from said server; and
a control unit that controls processing
20 operation of the software component acquired by said
acquisition unit based on the authentication information
acquired by said acquisition unit.

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2. The image formation system according to claim 1,
wherein said control unit restricts a range of resources
available for the software components, of resources provided
in said image formation apparatus, based on the
5 authentication information.

3. The image formation system according to claim 2,
wherein
when authentication based on the authentication
10 information has failed, said control unit controls so that
said display section and operation panel section of the
resources become available for the software components, and
controls so that all the resources become available for the
software components when the authentication based on the
15 authentication information has succeeded.

4. The image formation system according to claim 3,
wherein
the authentication information includes information
20 related to rights for using the respective resources by the
software components, and
said control unit decides whether the software
components can use the resources based on the information
related to the using rights.

5. The image formation system according to claim 1, wherein said image formation apparatus further comprises a transmission unit that transmits configuration information for said image formation apparatus to said server

5 when succeeding in the authentication based on the authentication information, and

said server dynamically organizes software components executable on said image formation apparatus based on the configuration information received from said image formation apparatus, and sends the organized software components back to said image formation apparatus.

6. The image formation system according to claim 5, wherein

15 said transmission unit transmits identification information for identifying said image formation apparatus to said server, and

said server identifies one or more of configuration information and a contract form of said image formation apparatus based on the identification information received from said image formation apparatus, dynamically organizes software components executable on said image formation apparatus based on the identified configuration information and/or contract form, and sends the organized software components back to said image formation apparatus.

7. The image formation system according to claim 1, wherein said server is a WWW server functioning on the Internet, and

said image formation apparatus further provides a
5 browser with which pages described in HTML are browsed.

8. The image formation system according to claim 7, wherein the software component acquired by said acquisition unit operates as a plug-in for said browser.

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9. The image formation system according to claim 7, wherein said image formation apparatus further establishes a virtual machine that can execute CPU-independent intermediate code, and the virtual machine executes the
15 software components accumulated in said server in the form of the intermediate code.

10. The image formation system according to claim 1, wherein, one vendor manages said server, and an another
20 vendor can register a software component to said server by paying a particular registration fee to the vendor that manages the server.

11. The image formation system according to claim 10, wherein the vendor is charged for an advertisement fee of a software component each time said image formation apparatus acquires the software component from said server.

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12. The image formation system according to claim 11, wherein a server of the third-party vendor can be registered with said image formation apparatus as a server allowed to be authenticated when the third-party pays a particular

10 registration fee.

13. The image formation system according to claim 12, wherein one or more of a charge for using said image formation apparatus and the registration fee paid by the third-party

15 vendor is changed according to a range of resources available for said image formation apparatus.

14. A software acquisition method in an image formation system which connects an image formation apparatus and a server to a network, said image formation apparatus having hardware one or more of resources of a display section, an operation panel section, a printing section, and an image pickup section and for providing one or more of services

of a printer, a copier, or a facsimile, and said server providing a software component to said image formation

apparatus, wherein said image formation apparatus performing the steps of:

selecting a desired software component from a list of software components accumulated in said server and
5 displayed on said display section;

acquiring the selected software component and authentication information from said server; and

controlling a processing operation of the acquired software component based on the acquired authentication
10 information.

15. The software acquisition method according to claim 14, wherein the controlling step restricts a range of resources available for the software component, of resources
15 provided in said image formation apparatus, based on the authentication information.

16. The software acquisition method according to claim 15, wherein,

20 when authentication based on the authentication information has failed, the controlling step controls so that said display section and operation panel section of the resources become available for the software components, and controls so that all the resources become available for
25 the software components when authentication based on the

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authentication information has succeeded.

17. The software acquisition method according to claim 16, wherein

5 the authentication information includes information related to rights for using the respective resources by the software components, and

the controlling step decides whether the software components can use the resources based on the information
10 related to the using rights.

18. The software acquisition method according claim 14, further comprising a step of transmitting configuration information for said image formation apparatus to said server
15 when said image formation apparatus has succeeded in authentication based on the authentication information, wherein

said server dynamically organizes software components executable on said image formation apparatus based on the
20 configuration information received from said image formation apparatus, and sends the organized software components back to said image formation apparatus.

19. The software acquisition method according to claim 18, wherein

in the transmitting step, identification information for identifying said image formation apparatus is transmitted to said server, and

said server identifies one or more of configuration information and a contract form of said image formation apparatus based on the identification information received from said image formation apparatus, dynamically organizes software components executable on said image formation apparatus based on the identified configuration information and/or contract form, and sends the organized software components back to said image formation apparatus.

20. The software acquisition method according to claim 14, wherein said server is a WWW server functioning on the Internet, and

said image formation apparatus has a browser with which pages described in HTML are browsed.

21. The software acquisition method according to claim 20, wherein the software component acquired in the acquiring step operates as a plug-in for said browser.

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22. The software acquisition method according to claim 20, wherein said image formation apparatus has a virtual machine that can execute CPU-independent intermediate code, and the virtual machine executes the software components accumulated in said server in the form of the intermediate code.

23. The software acquisition method according to claim 14, wherein, one vendor manages said server, and an another vendor can register a software component to said server by paying a particular registration fee to the vendor that manages the server.

24. The software acquisition method according to claim 23, wherein the vendor is charged for an advertisement fee of a software component each time said image formation apparatus acquires the software component from said server.

25. The software acquisition method according to claim 24, wherein a server of the third-party vendor can be registered with said image formation apparatus as a server allowed to be authenticated when the third-party pays a particular registration fee.

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26. The software acquisition method according to claim 25, wherein one or more of a charge for using said image formation apparatus and the registration fee paid by the third-party vendor is changed according to a range of 5 resources available for said image formation apparatus.

27. A computer readable recording medium for storing instructions, which when executed on a computer, causes the computer to realize a software acquisition method in an image 10 formation system which connects an image formation apparatus and a server to a network, said image formation apparatus having hardware one or more of resources of a display section, an operation panel section, a printing section, and an image pickup section and for providing one or more of services 15 of a printer, a copier, or a facsimile, and said server providing a software component to said image formation apparatus, wherein said image formation apparatus performing the steps of:

selecting a desired software component from a list 20 of software components accumulated in said server and displayed on said display section;

acquiring the selected software component and authentication information from said server; and

controlling a processing operation of the acquired 25 software component based on the acquired authentication

information.

28. A computer program for causing the computer to realize
a software acquisition method in an image formation system
5 which connects an image formation apparatus and a server
to a network, said image formation apparatus having hardware
one or more of resources of a display section, an operation
panel section, a printing section, and an image pickup
section and for providing one or more of services of a printer,
10 a copier, or a facsimile, and said server providing a software
component to said image formation apparatus, wherein said
image formation apparatus performing the steps of:

selecting a desired software component from a list
of software components accumulated in said server and
15 displayed on said display section;

acquiring the selected software component and
authentication information from said server; and

controlling a processing operation of the acquired
software component based on the acquired authentication
20 information.